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Dr. John W. O'Brien
Rector, Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, June 13, 1977 -- The election of the Parti Québécois government last November and ensuing events have precipitated the development of "community consciousness" among English-speaking Quebecers, according to the Rector of Concordia University, Dr. John W. O'Brien.

"We can say these months have been more satisfactory than expected" because of the English community's "growing effectiveness in organizing as a minority group" and because of "a beginning of a true debate on the impact of separation on Quebec," he said.

Dr. O'Brien was addressing the 1977 graduating class of Vanier CEGEP, St-Laurent, at Place des Arts, where he spoke about the role of the English community in Quebec and "the cautious optimism we may express about the future."

The English-speaking people in Quebec have taken cognizance of their position, and have reacted with firmness and moderation arising out of a realistic perception of the situation facing them, and out of an acceptance of the legitimate concerns of the French population, Dr. O'Brien said.

The newly-developing community consciousness aroused by the language debate must not be allowed to disintegrate, he added, and while "a minority group cannot expect that its views will prevail in detail and on every issue," the English must continue to articulate their concerns to all Quebecers with "patience, persistence and determination."

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We must not lose heart at temporary setbacks, he said, "remembering that the goal is not just communication of our concerns to the people holding political power at the moment, but to the whole community from which political power ultimately springs."

Dr. O'Brien expressed faith in the continued existence of the English community in Quebec because of its "will to survive as a group."

He cautioned against undue anxiety over the question of independence: "There will be months, perhaps years, of political activity around this issue. We must regard this as a natural condition, and not one leading to excessive concern or to a paralysis of action."

"The political process does respond to responsible and effective expression of the interests and concerns of various groups."

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